

August 1, 1955

Dear Dr. Sterne:

Thank you for your letter and for your reprint. I was interested primarily in the genetic mechanism by which the attenuated strains originate, rather than the implications for the mechanism of virulence. Unfortunately, this aspect has scarcely been touched in any work of which I am aware.

The possibility of genetic analysis in ~~xxx~~ anthrax may not be hopeless— have you noticed the paper by Brown et al. in the May issue of Journal of Bacteriology? Your concern for technique prompts me to try to stimulate your interest in this story, which has certain technical shortcomings, but doubtless a core of fact. Could you be induced to look into this matter yourself? The point is that, while motility has been studied, no other genetic factor has been, and there may prove to be a general mechanism of transduction of traits from one strain to another, as there is in Salmonella. I know that these authors have been obliged to terminate their studies, and for hygienic and other reasons, I am not eager to work with the organism on a large scale in my own laboratory. At any rate, I would welcome your own comment on the paper.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics